God, the Guide of Youth.

Briefly Open'd and Urg'd

IN A

SERMON

Preached with a ſpecial Relation to

Young Perſons,

January 1*ſt*. 169$\frac{4}{5}$.

And at the earneſt Intreaty of ſeveral of the Hearers Publiſhed.

By *T. CRUSO.*

Prov. 4. 10, 11.

Hear, Oh my Son, and receive my Sayings, and the years of thy Life ſhall be many.
I have taught thee in the way of Wiſdom, I have led thee in right paths.

London, Printed for *T. Cockerill*, at the *Three Leggs* in the *Poultrey*, 1695.

THE PREFACE.

AS *the* Conception *and* Birth *of the following Diſcourſe was truly owing to the pious Motion and Requeſt of ſome* Young Perſons, *from a Principle* (*I hope*) *of unfeigned Zeal for* God, *and the good of Souls; ſo it is* their *deſire, backt by many others, which hath encourag'd and produc'd it's* publick appearance *in the World. Whether* God *will make that uſe of it, by* turning *any of* the diſobedient to the Wiſdom of the juſt, *which may anſwer their Expectation, and my Intention, I am not able to foreſee, but am very well*

aſſur'd, that it neither will nor can effectually ſerve ſuch a purpoſe as that is, any further than He *is pleaſed to direct, and ſet it home upon the hearts of the Readers.*

It is therefore, with an Eye to God's *implored Influence and Bleſſing, that I have now made this* Second *particular Addreſs to ſuch as may be reckon'd in the* Youthful State *and period of Life; the general deſign both of this and the former, is the ſame; for as that perſwaded and preſt a timely* Oppoſition to the Devil, *this does in like manner ſollicite an early* Reſignation to God. *Some* Variety *there is in the* Seed, (*and 'tis fit that there ſhould be, for the avoiding of* Vain *and needleſs* Repetitions, *which may be a fault in* Preaching, *as well as in* Prayer) *and there was a* Difference *alſo in the* Seaſon of Sowing; *it having been ſuggeſted to me, that probably a* New-Years-Day

Matt. 6. 7.

Day *might give ſome peculiar advantage for the doing of a greater good; which is my only End.*

The renewing of ſuch Diſcourſes cannot be condemned as ſuperfluous, as long as the Age *hath ſo manifeſt need of them; and tho' want of the wiſhed Succeſs from what hath been already done, be apt to fill all well-affected minds with uncomfortable thoughts, yet this ſhould not deter or reſtrain from future Attempts, for then our* whole Miniſtry *might be laid aſide, and we might (perhaps with as much reaſon) ſay, as the* lamenting Prophet *did*, We will not make mention of him, nor ſpeak any more in his Name. Jer. 9. 20. *Divine Patience and Goodneſs, not only in* bearing, *but in* dealing long *with many refractory Sinners, is moſt certainly a Pattern to us, and the* Servants *may very* juſtly *be oblig'd to do what their* Great Maſter *freely*

deſcends to do. If God ſpeaketh once, yea twice, to man who perceiveth it not, *as it gives us occaſion to admire the riches of his* Grace, *ſo it intimates how little cauſe we have to repine at the* (*Improſperous*) *performance of our own* Duty. Job 33.14.

I have nothing further to ſignifie to the Reader of this plain Sermon, but that he will find it entirely Practical; *which I mention not, as if I thought that* Doctrinal Subjects *were not proper to be handled, or perus'd,* (*for undoubtedly* Clearneſs *of* Knowledge, *and Soundneſs in the* Faith, *have a very uſeful Tendency to true Holineſs of* Life) *but becauſe it is more becoming my Meanneſs to leave thoſe Subjects to abler Pens. It is exceeding deplorable, that we are fallen into a time wherein the anciently-acknowledged* Fundamentals *muſt be defended, that*

thoſe

those mouths of Socinian *Blasphemy may be stopt, which have been open'd very wide of late; and that better Instructions than those of the* Cracovian Catechism *may be provided for our* English Youth, *among whom the wretched taint seems to be too far spread. But the setting up of* corrupted Reason *in defiance to Scripture-Revelation, is the Spring of these Evils; and therefore I have here propos'd and recommended a Surer* Unerring Guide, *who is able to preserve from such Delusions, as well as from all Ungodliness.*

Jan. 15. 169$\frac{4}{5}$. T. C.

God, the Guide of Youth.
Briefly Open'd and Urg'd, &c.

JEREM. III. 4.

Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?

THIS Chapter contains ſeveral Inſtances of God's marvellous mercy in the earneſt Invitation of a very ſinful People to Repentance; no People could *need more* to be ſtirr'd up to this Duty, than the *Jews*; nor yet could any *deſerve leſs* Encouragement in the performance of it. Every place which they could look to, put them in mind of

Ver. 2. of their Defilements; ſo that as their hearts had fooliſhly *walked after their Eyes*, their Eyes might now juſtly *affect their Hearts*. But yet to quicken them the more, God manifeſts his Goodneſs *in Correcting them with Judgment*, and ſends his Rod to make them hearken to his Word;

Ver. 3. C. 5. 24, 25. *Therefore the ſhowers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain*; which is mentioned not only here, but afterwards again. Hereupon God *expoſtulates* with them in the words of the Text, *Wilt thou not from this time*, &c.?

In which words we may conſider theſe Two things, God's way and manner of Addreſs to this People, and the Language which he teaches them to ſpeak.

1. The *Way* and *Manner* of God's Addreſs to them; *Wilt thou not*, &c. 'Tis put in the form

form of a Queſtion, which is the moſt *Pathetical* arguing, and very frequently uſed by God in Scripture. So in another part of this Prophecy, *Wilt thou not be made clean? when ſhall it once be?* This is a more direct *Appeal* to the Conſcience of the Sinner, than any other general Methods of perſwaſion; 'tis a more powerful urging of the Sinner to anſwer to God's call, or to give a Reaſon why he does not. C. 13. 27.

2. The *Language* which God teaches them to ſpeak, as he bids *Iſrael* to *take with them words*, and then tells them what they ſhould ſay, *Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciouſly*; ſo here, he puts them upon *Crying* to him, and inſtructs them what they ſhould cry, *My Father, Thou art the Guide of my Youth.* Here is a *double relation* to God, which Hoſ. 14. 2.

they

they are taught to claim, the relation of a *Father*, and of a *Guide*.

C. 31. 9. 1. *My Father.* God owns himſelf to be *a Father to Iſrael*, and he was deſirous that they ſhould acknowledge him as ſuch alſo. They had given this Glory to another, even to ſenſleſs C. 2. 27. Idols, *Saying to a Stock, thou art my Father*; but now God ſolicites their return to their Duty; as afterwards in this Chapter, Ver. 19. *I ſaid, Thou ſhalt call me, My Father:* which indeed they had the higheſt Reaſon and greateſt Obligation to do.

2. *Thou art the Guide of my Youth.* This Clauſe may have a *Twofold reference*; Either, 1. To that *conjugal relation* which God had taken them into with himſelf; God ſtyling Iſa. 54. 5. himſelf *their Husband*, and the Husband

Husband in Scripture being termed, the *Guide of the Woman's Youth.* Or, 2. To his eminent *Providential Conduct* of them, when they were *first formed* to be his People. The time of their coming up out of the *Land of Egypt,* is often ſet forth by the *days of their Youth*; and then it was, that God *led them forth, and guided them by his ſtrength,* both through the Sea, and in the Deſart, till he brought them into *Canaan.* Prov. 2. 17. Hoſ. 2: 15. Exod. 15. 13.

This may ſuffice for the opening of the words, as they carry in them a particular reſpect to the *Jews.* My preſent deſign and work is to accommodate and improve them to another purpoſe. The *days* wherein we live, are extremely *Evil*; but yet we have a ſad and doleful Proſpect of the *next Age* becoming *worſe,* if God do not by ſome

ſome effectual means ſtop the wicked Courſe of the *Riſing Generation.* We ſee ſuch Crowds and Swarms of *young Ones* continually *poſting down* to Hell, and *bringing up* ſo much of Hell in the midſt of us, that both in compaſſion to them, and to our Native Countrey, we cannot but uſe ſome Chriſtian endeavours to open the Eyes of theſe *Mad Prodigals*, and to fetch them home. If God will pleaſe to Accompany and Bleſs the word which is now ſpoken to that end, by helping me to plead in his Name with ſuch, and by awakening their ears and hearts, to receive and comply with this Meſſage, both I and They, and many of thoſe that come after us all, will have cauſe of Thankfulneſs to God, in Time and to Eternity.

The

The main Point which I propose to speak to, is this, That

The chusing of God as the Guide of our Youth, is a very great and important Duty. Observ.

In handling of this, my Method shall be,

To shew, *First*, What it implies to chuse God as our Guide. I.

Secondly, In what respects Youth especially stands in need of such a Guide. II.

Thirdly, Why this is a Duty of so great importance? III.

Fourthly, Apply it: IV.

First, What is implyed in the *chusing* of God as our *Guide*. Here *Three* things should be open'd a little; what it supposes; wherein it consists; and what are the natural Consequences and Effects of it. I.

First,

First, What is *ſuppoſed* to the making choice of God as our Guide?

Anſ. A *Deep ſenſe* of the Fooliſhneſs, Falſeneſs, Weakneſs, and Unrulineſs of *our own Spirits.*

1. We muſt be ſeriouſly convinc't of the *Fooliſhneſs* of our own Spirits. No man in the World reſolvedly chuſes the Guidance of God, till he hath a due apprehenſion of this. *Solomon* tells us, and woful experience backs it, *That Fooliſhneſs is bound in the heart of a Child.* It is *bound,* in a double Senſe; ſo as to be rooted and *faſtned* there, and yet ſo as to be hid and *concealed* too. Not but that there are too many *open Diſcoveries* of it by its *fruits* to others; and nevertheleſs the *thing it ſelf* remains ſecret and unperceived to the perſons them-

Prov. 22.15.

themſelves. Tho' we be *really* Fools, yet we are hardly brought to *believe* we are ſo, but are ſtill *Wiſe in our own Conceits.* This is that which confirms and *binds* our Miſery upon us; for unleſs we *ſee* our Folly, we ſhall never take the right courſe which the Text preſcribes to *cure* it.

2. We muſt be convinc'd likewiſe of the *Falſeneſs* of our own Spirits. The Prophet warns us of *putting Confidence in a Guide*; which is eſpecially applicable to the *Heart* it ſelf. This is ſo *deceitful* and treacherous, that none can perfectly *know* it but God. We our ſelves cannot imagine or ſuſpect how bad it is; they who have preſumptuouſly *truſted* their own hearts, have always found them to be a great deal worſe than they ever *thought* them to be. It is moſt unqueſtionably true, that no one Mic. 7. 5.

ever expected *any good* from himſelf, but that he hath been diſappointed and deceiv'd *therein.* It is of great uſe to us, to believe and remember this; otherwiſe we ſhall continue Self-confident ſtill, and the Conduct of God will be rejected. Men will not remove themſelves *out of their own hands*, except they are apprehenſive of being *betray'd.*

Ezek. 16.30. 3. We muſt be alſo convinc'd of the *Weakneſs* of our own Spirits. *How weak is thy heart, ſaith the Lord God?* How unable to withſtand any ſmall *Temptation*, or to perform any acceptable *Service*? How unable to bear up againſt it's own *Corruptions*, or to hold out in the exerciſe of *Grace*? How unable to prevent the *inrodes* of the Devil, or to forbear *running forth* to polluting Objects? What a *Spirit of infirmity* is it poſſeſt and *bowed down*

down with? How wretchedly feeble does it appear to be, upon the leaſt *Tryal* of it's ſtrength? This ſhould be known and conſidered by us, or elſe we ſhall deſtroy our ſelves by *leaning to our own arm*, as well as our own *underſtanding*; for we ſhall never make unfeigned Application to God, ſo long as we fancy that we are ſtrong enough without him.

4. We muſt be further convinc'd of the *Unruline ſs* of our own Spirits. The Scripture does not compare us in vain to the moſt irregular and *untamed* Creatures; to a *Wild Aſſes colt*; and to a *Wild Aſs that is accuſtomed to the Wilderneſs*. We naturally *break all Yokes*, and *burſt all bonds*; are impatient of juſt reſtraint, and frowardly purſue our own ſinful Inclinations, how miſchievous ſoever they be. Ma-

Job 11. 12. Jer. 2. 24.

giſtrates, Miniſters, Relatives, Friends, cannot *Rule* us, nor we our ſelves. It is much eaſier to *take a City*, and conquer a Nation, yea to carry our Victorious Arms through the World, than to *rule our Spirits*; the Notion of *Self-Government* is *but a Notion*, and impoſſible to be put in Practice, till we come out of our ſtate of Nature.

Prov. 16. 32.

2. *Secondly*, Wherein does the chuſing of God for our Guide, *conſiſt?*

Anſ. In the *committing of our ſelves* to his Wiſdom, Fidelity, Power, and Authority.

1. It includes a committing of our ſelves to the infinite *Wiſdom* of God, to be taught and counſell'd by him; ſo did *David*; *ſhew me* (ſays he) *thy ways, Oh Lord, teach me thy paths.* This is the proper work of a Guide, to *direct* the Ignorant Traveller in

Pſal. 25. 4.

in a ſtrange Land, and unknown Countrey. Such is our Caſe during the *time of our Sojourning* here in this World; and it is the work of the *only wiſe God*, to *guide our feet, and direct our ſteps for us*, which he will do if we ſincerely reſign our ſelves to him. That which undoes us, is not God's *unwillingneſs to inſtruct us*, but our own *unteachableneſs*; there is a *Voice behind us*, but we *refuſe to hearken*, and this *perverts our way*.

2. It includes a committing of our ſelves to the Fidelity of God, without any jealouſie or diſtruſt of it. God is faithful in his ordering and diſpoſing of us; and this holy *David* was perſwaded of, when he put up that Prayer; *Lead me in thy truth, and teach me.* We are to *aſſure our own hearts*, that 'tis impoſſible to walk in a *way which* Pſal. 25. 5.

is

is not good, if we *walk after the Lord*; that if we *follow God fully*, we can never follow him to our diſadvantage. No man chuſes ſuch a Guide, as he thinks will carry him *out of his Road*, or *into Danger*. All ſuch unbelieving fears, muſt therefore be baniſh'd from our hearts, with reference to God, that we may be entirely and chearfully given up to him.

3. There is a committing of our ſelves to the *Power* of God for our Security and *Protection*, and for our Aſſiſtance and *Support*. This is one part of the Office of a Guide, to *guard* thoſe that are under his Care, and likewiſe to *keep* them *from falling*. This is intimated by that paſſage of the Prophet; *There is none to guide her among all the Sons whom ſhe hath brought forth, neither is there any that takes her by*

Iſa. 51. 18.

by the hand, &c. Now this is one of the things which God performs for us, and which we are humbly to depend upon him for. *Hold up my goings* (ſays *David*) *in thy paths, that my Foot-ſteps ſlip not.* So he dealt with his *Iſrael* of old, when he *led them through the deep, as an Horſe in the Wilderneſs, that they ſhould not ſtumble.* Pſal. 17. 5. Iſa. 63. 13.

4. There is a committing of our ſelves to the Supream *Authority* of God, to be ſway'd and ruled by him. Guidance and Government go together; they ſeem to be Equivalent terms, *Having no Guide, Overſeer or Ruler.* The Governours of the People are called their *Leaders*; and therefore 'tis but an empty Pretence to make as if we were willing to be led by God, when we oppoſe the ſetting up of his *Kingdom* within us, and living in Iſa. 63. 13. Prov. 6. 7. Iſa. 3. 12.

in a ſtate of Subjection to him. We do not heartily Conſent to the *Conduct* of God, unleſs we agree to be under his *Dominion*. So that if we deal truly in this Caſe, we muſt look upon him as our Holy *Soveraign*, and account that *all his Commandments are Righteouſneſs*, as the Holy Ghoſt affirms them to be.

Pſal. 119. 172.

3. *Thirdly*, What are the proper *Conſequences* and *Effects* of chuſing God to be our Guide?

Anſ. It will be ſeen by the *reſpect* which we bear to the Spirit and Word, to ſpiritual and natural Fathers.

1. A ſtrict regard to the *Motions of the Spirit*, this is ſtyled in Scripture, *walking after the Spirit*, and *walking in the Spirit*. The Enquiry therefore will be, how we carry our ſelves towards the Spirit of God? When he *ſtrives with us*, whether we yield

Rom. 8. 1,4. Galat. 25. 16, 5.

yield to him, or ſtrive againſt him? When he would *keep us back* from ſin, whether we deſiſt and forbear, or hold our Reſolution, and go on notwithſtanding? When he *ſtirs us up* to duty, whether we omit or delay it, or whether we ſet about it inſtantly with all our might? When we feel a Divine *impulſe* in our ſelves, are we wrought upon, influenc'd and determin'd by it, or not? do we *gratifie* the Spirit of God by a ready Compliance, or do we *grieve* him by a ſullen reſiſtance? According as we can anſwer hereunto, God is or is not our real Guide, for it is *by his Spirit* that he *leads*.

Joh. 16. 13. Rom. 8. 14.

2. A due attendance to the *light of the Word*; for here we have a written Copy of the mind of God, and ſtated Rules given us to walk by. We are not to look for ſudden and extraordi-

nary Revelations to direct us in the Course of obedience, but to eye this Authentick and setled discovery of the Divine Will. The *young man* is bid to *cleanse his way, by taking heed to it according to this Word.* And *David* prays in the same Psalm, that *his steps might be order'd in this Word.* Now we should therefore examine our selves, how we stand affected towards the Word, and what reverence and observance we pay to it; Do we consult the Scripture *more*, or *less* than *flesh and blood*? Do we study it in order to a practical acquaintance, or not? Does it constantly *dwell in us*, and is it carefully *laid before us*, or do we neglect it, and forget it?

Psal. 119. 9.

Ver. 133.

3. A just respect to your *Instructors in Christ*, especially to *spiritual Fathers*. They who will not *obey their Word*, are plainly not

not under the Guidance of God; for Miniſterial Conduct is *Subordinate* to his, and Miniſters are called *Shepherds*, becauſe they are under the *chief*, and it is their ſpecial Province to *lead the flock*. God does no where enjoyn or countenance ſordid *Slavery* to *Roman Prieſts*, (or any like them) but on the other hand he is as far from allowing or tolerating the *prophane Contempt* of his own Meſſengers, that are *Paſtors after his heart*. It is no better than *mocking of God*, to ſit under any Goſpel Miniſtry, and not to be aw'd, or govern'd by it. The *teachings of God* are conveyed to you by *Men* like your ſelves; and therefore in *deſpiſing them*, you *ſet him at nought*. When you have choſen one to inſpect, *and watch for your Souls*, you ought to *ſubmit your ſelves* to him. Hebr. 13 17.

4. Regular obedience to *natural Parents*, or ſuch as are in their ſtead to you. It is very *becoming* to take their Advice in all weighty and eminent Caſes; it is *neceſſary* to receive and perform their Commands in all things lawful; but above all, 'tis moſt *indiſpenſable Duty* to hearken to their Godly admonitions and perſwaſions in the Matters of Religion. They who can be *deaf* to theſe, do evidently renounce and relinquiſh God from being their Guide; and therefore the *ſtubborn and rebellious Child* hath reaſon to ſay, as he in the Parable did, *Father, I have ſinned againſt heaven, and before thee*; you cannot ſin againſt *them*, but that you ſin againſt *heaven* alſo. God ſays by *Solomon*, *My Son, hear thou the inſtruction of thy Father, and forſake not the Law of thy Mother*; from whence 'tis

Luk. 15. 18.

Prov. 1. 8.

'tis manifeſt that their *inſtruction* ſhould be as a *Law* to you. Such as *obey their Parents in the Lord*, do indeed obey the Lord in their Parents; and God hath intereſted himſelf ſo much in their Quarrel, that he hath threatned diſobedient Children with having their *Eyes pickt out and devour'd by Ravens and Eagles.* C. 30. 17.

The *Second* Head is to ſhew, in what regards *Youth* does particularly *ſtand in need* of ſuch a Guide as the Text here commends to our Choice. To this purpoſe conſider, II.

Firſt, We are all born *out of the way.* Young and old, Fathers and Children, are *are all gone aſide.* We are not made *Sinners* by *imitation*, but by the Apoſtacy of the *firſt Man.* We do not meerly *learn the Road* to Hell from the bad examples of other perſons, but we *come into the* I. Pſal. 14. 3.

Pſal. 58. 3. *World* with our *faces towards* Hell. *The wicked are eſtranged from the womb, they go aſtray aſſoon as they are born.* Our very firſt Motions are diſorderly, and Satan *poſſeſſes us in the beginning of our way.* We are *turned aſide* by *youthful luſts* which are bred within, before we ſtep forth upon the publick Stage. Our tender minds are far from producing any *right thoughts* in our moſt innocent and uncorrupted years. *The imagination of Man's heart is evil from his youth.* Every Child of *Adam* is a miſerable *Wanderer* from the birth.

2. Secondly, We are born uncapable of *finding the way*, or of putting our ſelves into it. As the *Sodomites* at *Lot's* Door were Gen. 19. 11. univerſally *ſmitten with Blindneſs both ſmall and great; ſo from the leaſt to the greateſt*, till our New-birth,

birth, we want the *ſeeing Eye*. *Experience* does not help the Aged, nor does the *Vigour of Nature* recover ſight to younger Perſons. We inherit this ſpiritual infirmity from the Womb, that the *Windows* of the Soul are *darkned*. Tho' we are brought forth in the *Goſpel-day*, yet our true Character is, *Children of the night*. Whatever arrogant opinion young ones may have of themſelves, the Holy Ghoſt hath link't the *Youths* and the *ſimple Ones* together, and hath ſet forth the *young man* as one *void of underſtanding*; void of it, we truly are, before God infuſe it into us. Prov. 7. 7.

Thirdly, The *ſooner* we are *in the way*, the *better* it is for us. We may make the greater and quicker *Progreſs*, and more comfortably expect a final *Welcome* in our *Father's houſe*. No 3.

Error can be rectified too soon; much less such a fatal and destructiveone, as we naturally *live in.* If we were in a *journey* which requir'd *dispatch*, and upon which our *Life* depended, and were taking a *wrong Course*, we would be glad of the *speediest* information of our Mistakes. Why then should the youngest say in their heart, *the time* of returning to God *is not yet come?* What an Honour is it to young ones to be *taught of God*, so as to be able to say with *David*, *I understand more than the Ancients, because I keep thy Precepts.* How many that defer and put off the work of Conversion to elder years, do then wish as *Job* did, *O that I were, as I was in the days of my Youth!* We can rid more ground, and *move more nimbly* in our youth, than when old Age overtakes us; and tho' we should *reach* Heaven

Psal. 119. 100.

Job 29. 4.

Heaven at the laſt, yet we ſhall be fuller of doubts and fears *in our going* thither. Perhaps (and that is the *moſt* which can be ſaid) it may not be too late in reſpect of *ſafety*, but it may be too late for our *Satisfaction*.

Fourthly, The *longer* we *proceed in a falſe way*, the *harder* 'tis to *forſake* and leave it. Youth is a ſeaſon for the fixing of *Habits* and Cuſtoms, good or bad; and if they be bad, it will mightily increaſe the difficulties of ſaving Repentance. *Iſrael* was a *Tranſgreſſor from the womb*, and ſo continued. They were refractory and incorrigible, and deaf to all kind of Arguments; and when God traces their diſeaſe to its *root* and ſpring, he tells them, *this hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedſt not my voice*. Men are ſtrangely rivetted and confirm'd in 4. Iſa. 48. 8. Jerm. 22. 21.

in their diſobedience, if it outlives *that time of Life.* If we *bear* the Devils *yoke in our youth*, it grows ſo *eaſie*, pleaſant and familiar to us, that there muſt be ſo much more labour to *break it off.* A way which we are *uſed* to, and have a long time *travelled in*, we are not very readily *diverted from*; but we muſt be *driven* and *pull'd* out of it with more than ordinary violence.

5. Fifthly, We live to *no purpoſe* at all, or *worſe* than none, till we live to God. The Royal *Preacher* ſays, *that Childhood and youth are vanity*; not only vain in regard of *natural frailty*, but vain in a *Moral Senſe*, as not anſwering any valuable end. What do our *Beings* ſerve for, if the *Author* of them be forgotten? God may come to every one of us, as he did to *Elijah* in the Cave, and ſay, *What doſt*

Eccle. 11. 10.

doſt thou here? What Employment can we put our reaſonable Faculties to, which is truly *worthy* of them? What *Childiſh toys* do we run after, and what *trifles* do we buſie our ſelves about, till God hath the managing of our Hearts? We *do we know not what*; at the beſt we do what will *avail* us nothing; and it had been good for us, if we had never been *capable* of doing any thing at all. 1 Kin 19. 9.

Sixthly, Whatever *Relations* we come to be caſt into, we ſhall not only be *uſeleſs* and unſerviceable, but do *harm* and miſchief in them, while we *live without God*. When *Youth* is growing up to *Manhood*, it is the uſual time, wherein Perſons think of *diſpoſing* themſelves ſome way or other in the world; but what *unprofitable Burdens*, yea what *woful Plagues* will you be 6.

be to thoſe whom you have to do with, if you are not under Divine Conduct? If you ſhould live to be *Heads of Families*, or have any ſhare of influence upon *larger Societies*, what a wretched condition will they be in, that are placed under you? How unfit will you be to be *Guides to others*, that have not choſen God to be *your own?* When there are *blind Leaders of the Blind*, our Lord hath told us, whither both of them muſt *fall.*

Matt. 15.14.

III. The *Third* thing propounded, is to ſhew, Why this is a Duty of ſo *great importance*, to chuſe God as the Guide of our Youth? Much of the *Reaſon* of it hath been already hinted, and more will appear, by what follows. As

Firſt,

First, We are under very *early engagements* to God. He hath an undeniable right to be *our God from our mother's belly*, because we owe our very Beings to him. We are bound by the Law of our *Creation* to make choice of God for our Guide and Ruler. It is a shameful aggravation of Sin, to be *unmindful of the rock that begat us.* 'Tis most true, that God did so; our *formation in the womb* was his Omnipotent work; *Thine hands* (says *Job*) *have made me, and fashioned me together round about.* The Text it self may suggest this Argument to us, My *Father*, Thou art, *&c.* God, our *heavenly* Father, is ten thousand times more to us, than any *earthly* one can be; therefore as soon as we begin to *breathe* in his Air, he may challenge a propriety in us, and dominion over us. 1. Deut. 32. 18. Job 10. 8.

Second-

2. Secondly, We are under *multiplied numberleſs* engagements to God, before we arrive at our *youthful period.* There is not a *moment* between that and our firſt coming into the world, but what is *fill'd up* with mercy. *The time would fail to ſpeak* of the vaſt *variety* of mercies which attend us throughout our *Infancy* and *Childhood.* *God loved* Iſrael *when he was a child*; and how largely hath God expreſt his kindneſs and care with reſpect to us at the ſame age! how many thouſand *deaths* do poor helpleſs Infants eſcape, through the watchfulneſs of an Almighty *Providence!* whence is it, but from the *overſight* of this vigilant *Eye*, that every Child does not, like that *lunatick ſon* in the Goſpel, *fall oft-times into the fire, and oft into the water!* who hath *brought you up,*

Hoſ. 11.1.

Matt. 17.15.

up, and nouriſht you, ever ſince your bringing forth; who hath *bound and ſtrengthned your* tender *arms*; who hath made you to *increaſe in wiſdom and ſtature*, which you cannot *add a cubit to*, but only God? Conſider ſeriouſly the *riches of goodneſs* ſpent upon you, and (I may almoſt venture to ſay) refuſe his guidance if you can.

Thirdly, We cannot hope that God ſhould be the *ſtaff of our old age*, if he be not choſen as the Guide of our Youth. If we reject him in our *ſpritely* flouriſhing days, what favour can we look for in our *crazy* declining years? How can you ſay, as *David* boldly does, *This God will be our guide even unto death*, unleſs he be freely and delightfully choſen now? How can you expect that he ſhould *carry you to your hoary hairs*, (as he graciouſly 3. Pſal. 48. 4. Iſa. 46. 4.

ciouſly promiſeth to do) if your youthful heads be not *found in the way of righteouſneſs?* Shall God *remember mercy* to you, when life is run out to the very *dregs*, if you *forget your duty* to him all the time before? You cannot have any good grounds of hope that it will be ſo, but rather you may reaſonably fear to find God *afar off*, when the *evil days come*; and that when thoſe *unpleaſant years draw nigh*, he will be at the greateſt *diſtance.*

4. *Fourthly*, We cannot think to *receive any Bleſſing* from God in any of our *Affairs*, except we be under his Guidance. If he do not *direct your Paths* (which is the priviledge of thoſe only that *acknowledge him*) what expectation can you have, but that (as he did to *Bilaam*, whoſe *way was perverſe before him*) he ſhould

Prov. 3. 6.

come

come out to withſtand you? Tho you be placed in *lawful Callings*, and proſecute them with the greateſt *diligence*, I muſt denounce this Sentence againſt you in the Name of God, That the *fruit of your labour* will have a *blaſt* upon it, or the very *eating of it* will be *poyſon* to you; either your *Undertakings*, or your very *Bleſſings* will be *Curſt*.

1. Your Undertakings will be curſt. Nothing that you *ſet your hand unto*, ſhall *proſper*; but if you *walk in the counſel of the ungodly*, you ſhall be *as the chaff which the wind driveth away*. If you *ſow much*, you ſhall *reap but little*; all your care and induſtry ſhall ſignify nothing; you may *riſe up early, and ſit up late*, and all in vain; a *flame ſhall dry up your branches*, and your *ſubſtance ſhall melt*, Pſalm 1. 4.

and drop through *a bag with holes.*

2. If it be not *so*, it will be *worse*; there shall be a curse upon your Blessings themselves. If your *way be prosperous*, even
Prov. 1. 32. that *prosperity shall destroy* you. The better you speed, the more fatal it will be. If your *Voyage* be successful, and you come home *richly laden*, yet God not being concern'd in the *steering* of your Course, your Misery will be the greater. Your *unsanctified Wealth* will the more effectually *undo* you.

5. *Fifthly*, We shall certainly bring a great deal of *Dishonour* upon our selves, and all that have any concernment in us, if God hath not the management of us. What wretched *Scandals* do they prove to the *Names* they bear, and the *Families* from which they spring, that have the

the *reins thrown over their necks*, and are *let looſe to work their own wills* without controul! How many Parents are *brought to ſhame by children left to themſelves?* What a Judgment therefore muſt the want of Divine Conduct be! Holy *Job* himſelf, *bleſſed the name of the Lord* under his greateſt Afflictions; but his *Sons* ſeemed to have *curſed God in their hearts* in their greateſt Plenty, which turned to the reproach of their Excellent Father, as well as their own ruin. If therefore you would *do worthily in your Generations*, and ſecure your credit from the *Stains* and *Blemiſhes* which others commonly contract, you muſt reſign your ſelves to God.

Prov. 29.15.

Sixthly, We ſhall have very *ſad Reflections* to make *at laſt* upon our ſhameful *Irregularities*, 6.

ties, if we do not prevent them by chuſing of God to be our Guide. How comfortable would it be, if when we are near the cloſe of our Lives, we can appeal to Heaven with *David*, *Oh God, thou haſt taught me from my youth!* Or, if we can look over the ſeveral Commands of God, and ſay (without any Check or Contradiction from Conſcience) as that *young Man* in the Goſpel did, *All theſe things have I kept from my youth up!* But if we muſt rather ſay, All theſe have *I broken*, how diſmal will the review be! How *mournfully* will ſuch young ones cry out, when their *fleſh is conſuming*, and their *Spirit departing*; *How have I hated inſtruction, and my heart deſpiſed reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear unto them!* This will be the Language of your

Pſalm 71.17.

Matt. 19.20.

Prov. 5.12, 13.

your *Death-beds*, how jolly and confident ſoever you be now.

Seventhly, You know not *how ſoon that end* may come, which will make you wiſh that God had been the *Director of your way*. The Apoſtle *Paul* ſpeaks of *exhorting young men to be ſober-minded*; but they are ready to fancy that this is an *unſeaſonable Leſſon*, as if it were time enough to put Sobriety in practice, when 'tis *impoſſible in a courſe of nature* that they ſhould live much longer. But *come now, and let us reaſon together:* Have you indeed any aſſurance now for *a great while to come?* Who can tell whether your time may not be *ſhorter* than that of the *oldeſt Perſon*, whom you know living? How often does the firſt Generation ſee the ſecond go before it! Tho you

7. Tit. 2. 6.

you be now in your *full ſtrength*, or coming towards it, how quickly may it be broken and deſtroyed, if God hath determined to cut you off? 'How *loud a Paſſing-Bell* 'hath God been ringing 'among us a few days 'ago, that the *whole Na-* 'tion might hear!* To 'ſhew us, That they 'who are the *breath of* 'their people's noſtrils, have no 'command of the *breath in their* 'own; but that it is as liable to 'go forth in the prime and flower 'of their years, as other mens; 'to ſhew us that *Majeſty* cannot 'ſuſpend or put off the ſtroke 'of *Mortality*; but that the 'Lives of *Princes*, like Common 'Perſons, may be *ſnapt in the* 'midſt. How then can any of you promiſe your ſelves the *Afternoon of a Summer's day?*

The late Q. *Mary* died four Days before the preaching of this, *Decem.* 28. 1694. in the 33d year of Her Age.

Eighthly

Eighthly, It must needs be a very *dreadful account* which you will be forc't *very shortly* to give at the *Tribunal of God*, if you go on in an extravagant Course, *walking contrary to him.* It is upon this Argument, that *Solomon* insists, for the reclaiming of youthful Persons from their Folly and Madness. *Rejoyce, oh young man in thy Youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee to Judgment.* In the former part of the Verse one wou'd think, that the Holy Ghost gave a full *Toleration* and *License* to the Vanities and Debaucheries of Youth; the young ones who did so as is there said, will cry it up as *good Doctrine*, and say, This is as

8.

Eccle. 11.9.

you be now in your *full ſtrength*, or coming towards it, how quickly may it be broken and deſtroyed, if God hath determined to cut you off? 'How *loud a Paſſing-Bell* 'hath God been ringing 'among us a few days 'ago, that the *whole Na-* '*tion might hear!* To 'ſhew us, That they 'who are the *breath of* '*their people's noſtrils*, have no 'command of the *breath in their* '*own*; but that it is as liable to '*go forth* in the prime and flower 'of their years, as other mens; 'to ſhew us that *Majeſty* cannot 'ſuſpend or put off the ſtroke 'of *Mortality*; but that the 'Lives of *Princes*, like Common 'Perſons, may be *ſnapt in the* '*midſt*. How then can any of you promiſe your ſelves the *Afternoon of a Summer's day?*

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8.

Eccle. 11.9.

as we would have it; but that *Corrective* which comes in, in the latter part of the Verſe, diſcovers the true meaning of the Holy Ghoſt, and ſpoils all the young Man's pleaſure. Our Accountableneſs *to God for* all theſe things, is an uncomfortable and frightful rebuke to the indulging of *our ſelves in* them. Conſider therefore, that if God be not your *gracious Guide*, he will be your *revenging Judge*; and conſequently, you will have a *miſerable walk through the valley of the ſhadow of Death* to the Bar of Chriſt, and a *more miſerable hurry from thence* to the everlaſting place of the Damned. 'Tis without all Controverſie, that never any Soul got to Heaven, the *Habitation of God*, without following the *Conduct of God*. We may learn this from the *Pſal-*

miſt

miſt, Thou ſhalt guide me with thy Counſel, and afterwards receive me to Glory. God's *Counſel* muſt be regarded now, or his *Glory* will not be obtain'd hereafter. Pſal. 73.24.

The *Laſt* thing is, To *Apply* all this. Which that I may do in the moſt profitable manner that I can, I would ſpeak a little particularly to two *ſorts* of perſons, *viz.* thoſe that have not choſen God for their Guide, and thoſe that have. IV.

Firſt, To them that *have not* yet choſen God to be their Guide, both young and old. 1.

1. To you who are *young*. Let me ask, and argue with you in the words of the Text, Will you not *from this time* cry unto God, *&c.*? My Heart's deſire is, that *this Scripture might be fulfilled this day* in every one, at leaſt in ſome one, or more

of you. *To morrow* will not be ſo good for this Purpoſe, as *this Day*. And that for theſe Reaſons.

1. Becauſe the *preſent time* is always beſt; moſt acceptable to God, and ſafeſt for you. 'Tis uncertain what *this Evening and Night may bring forth*; before to morrow you may be paſt hope, and paſt remedy; out of the reach of mercy, and uncapable of performing this Duty. Or God may then *turn the back to you* inſtead of *ſpreading out his hand*; if you now refuſe *his* Call, he may refuſe *yours*, when to morrow comes.

(2.) This day is a very *Signal* and *Memorable* Seaſon, the great *Feaſt of the Paſſover* was inſtituted by God, and obſerved by the *Jews, in the firſt Month in every year*; which was the Month wherein God *brought them*

Exod. 12. 2.

them up out of the house of bondage. Therefore do you, that call your selves *Christians*, turn this day, the *first of your Year*, into a *spiritual Festival*, by consecrating your selves to God, your Deliverer from *sinful Servitude.*

(3.) If you do so, you will make this day *so much the more remarkable.* It will be the first day of a *New Life* to you, as well as a *New Year.* You who have been *dead* for so many years, will this day *begin to live*, partake of a Divine *quickning*, and a gracious *Resurrection.* This will vastly out-shine the day of your natural *Birth*; for then you were *born in sin*, and a *Child of wrath*; but now you will be *in Christ*, and a *New Creature.*

(4.) Hereby you will make all your *following days* truly happy and *illuſtrious* alſo. You may *henceforward* write *Emmanuel* for your Motto, and *date* the ſure enjoyment of God's favourable preſence with you. As when the *Jews* laid the *foundation* of the Lord's Temple, he tells them, *From this day will I bleſs you*; ſo you may *reckon* from this day, that throughout all the *enſuing year*, or years of your life, God will accompany you, provide for you, and concern himſelf about you, as he does for his own *Children*, and the members of his Family. Being this day taken into the *houſhold of God*, it ſhall be *well* with you at all times hereafter; whether you *outlive* this year which you have now *begun*, or not, you may have peace and ſatiſ-

Hagg. 2. 18, 19.

ſatisfaction unſpeakable; for *both worlds are yours.*

2. To you who are *elder perſons*, that have paſt the time of Youth, and attained to *riper Years.* It is yet *more neceſſary* for you to lay hold of *this time* for a reſolved choice of God, and cleaving to him. If you do not with the *concluſion* of the *old Year, put off the Old man, with his deeds*, you are of all others the moſt without excuſe. Think with your ſelves, Coloſ. 3. 9.

(1) How *many opportunities* you have already ſlipt, and therefore how much it behoves you to ſlip *no more.* You have *enjoyed multitudes* of ſeaſons beyond what others have done, and 'tis very diſmal to conſider, that hitherto you have *improved none.* God hath waited *longer*

to

to be gracious to you, than he can be ſuppoſed to have done, with reference to younger perſons; Chriſt hath ſtood knocking *longer* at your doors, and therefore he will take it *worſe* from you than from any, if after ſuch *continued* repulſes, you do not *now* admit and receive him.

(2.) You have greater cauſe than others, even *this day*, to alter your courſe, becauſe you are moſt apparently nearer your *laſt day*. The more *ſuch* days you have ſeen, the leſs likely it is that you ſhould ſurvive long enough to ſee *another*. It may be ſome of you are not only inſenſibly *going to your long home*, but in great meaſure are ſenſibly *gone* towards it. 'Tis poſſible that ſome may (as we are wont to ſay) have *one foot*

in

in the grave, and have not yet *walkt one ſtep with God.* If you do not *think on your ways, and turn your feet now*, even according to natural probability, there are but a few *ſteps betwixt you and Hell.*

(3.) Thoſe few, who *while they are yet young* (as was ſaid of *Joſiah*) *begin to ſeek after God, will riſe up in judgment and condemn you.* Their examples do now *upbraid* and ſhame you; and therefore, if you felt any thing of *juſt Emulation* in your own Breaſts, and were apprehenſive what a *foul Diſparagement* it is to be *outſtript*, and exceeded by them that in reſpect of years, are *far behind you*, you would reſolve this day to be the Lord's. Miſ-ſpend not one *minute of future time*, as you have done what *is paſt*, when

2 Chr. 34. 3.

when ſome of your *Juniors* are ſuch commendable Preſidents in *laying out* the *ſame* Months and Years, which are now *loſt* to you, to great advantage.

2. *Secondly*, A few Words to them that have already made ſuch a choice of God, whether Young or Old. I would adviſe and perſwade both to theſe two things.

1. *Bleſs God* for the *inclining* and influencing of your Hearts to chuſe him. Offer to him a *New Thankſgiving* upon that account this day; and do not *ſacrifice the praiſe* of it to *your ſelves. It is God that hath wrought in you to will* ſuch a Self-ſurrender; for by Nature you *were* as much averſe to it, as any can *now remain.* Make your acknowledgments to him for

for it, as for one of the *greateſt Mercies* which he could beſtow, or you receive; a Mercy which you can never ſufficiently *admire* or *celebrate*, tho you ſhould ſpend *every Year*, and *every Day*, in thinking and ſpeaking of it.

2. *Renew* the Solemn Dedication of your ſelves to God *at this time.* Tho you have done it *heretofore*, do it now *again*; for it cannot be done *too firmly*, and therefore neither can it be done *too frequently.* This is a Day (with many) of *ſending gifts one to another*, even to thoſe that have *formerly* partaken of their Kindneſs on the *ſame occaſion.* Why ſhould not we then *repeat the giving of our ſelves to the Lord* in a peculiar manner, as oft as this time *returns* upon us? It was the Laudable Cuſtom of the

Author of the [Fulfilling of the Scripture] *and other Excellent Treatiſes.*

Worthy and Famous Mr. *Robert Fleming*, to ſet apart this day for ſuch a purpoſe, near Fifty years ſucceſſively. Let us *go and do likewiſe*, that we may be able, as long as we live, to look back ſtill upon this *Day*, in all our Temptations for our *Stability and Comfort.*

THE END.

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